

## NIH Animal Transportation Guidelines

### A. General

1. All methods of transporting NIH animals must provide for the health and welfare of the animals.
2. Transportation of animals shall be done in a direct and timely manner, avoiding public areas and areas primarily used by NIH employees and patients.
3. Animals shall not be transported with any other animal, substance or device that may be expected to be injurious to their health or welfare.
4. Care shall be exercised in handling enclosures used to transport live animals. They shall not be tossed, dropped, needlessly tilted, stacked in a manner which may reasonably be expected to result in their falling, or handled in any manner which may cause physical trauma or stress to the animals.
5. Temperature extremes are to be avoided when animals are transported and special precautions or postponements are required when temperatures are below 45 degrees Fahrenheit or above 85 degrees Fahrenheit and may jeopardize the welfare of the animals.
6. The Animal Welfare Regulations (AWRs) shall be followed in transporting regulated laboratory animals in intra or interstate commerce. However, the AWRs specific enclosure standards are not applicable for hand carrying rodents in containers between buildings on the NIH campus.
7. Transportation of animals must comply with applicable state and local laws and regulations.
8. It is essential that primary enclosures be used in the transportation of animals, and that they be escape proof, properly labeled, provide adequate ventilation, can be sanitized or disposed of and prevent the spread of pathogenic microorganisms, chemicals or radioactive materials where indicated. The enclosures should be opaque or shielded in such a way as to be nonstressful to the animals.
9. Cargo areas used in the transportation of animals shall be cleaned and decontaminated as necessary to prevent contamination of future animal deliveries.
10. Veterinary Resources Program (VRP) provides a central Animal Transportation Service (301-496-8184) for NIH with environmentally controlled trucks and trained drivers. It is available as needed for the delivery of all species of animals on the NIH campus and locally. Its use is required for transporting primates, farm animals, dogs and cats off the NIH reservation unless another acceptable method is justified and approved by the Institute or Center (IC) Veterinarian.

11. ICs may develop specific procedures for the transportation, receipt and shipment of animals if they have requirements that differ from these guidelines. The responsibility for development and approval of these specific IC procedures lies with the IC Scientific Director (SD), following recommendations of that IC's Animal Care and Use Committee (ACUC). A dated copy of the written guidelines shall be forwarded to the NIH Office of Animal Care and Use.

12. The IC Veterinarian (or other IC) Animal Transportation Coordinator as designated by the (IC SD) is responsible for oversight of these NIH (and/or IC) animal transportation guidelines, can grant exceptions when it is considered in the best interest of the animal(s), and is the contact person for information concerning the transportation, receipt and shipment of animals. Conflicts regarding animal transportation issues will be resolved by the IC ACUC or NIH ARAC.

#### **B. Movement of animals within an NIH building**

1. Occupants of the building should be protected from allergens of animal origin, microorganisms, chemicals, radioactive materials and escaped animals.
2. See Clinical Center (Bldg. 10) Research Animal Transportation Policy 614, dated 8/00.

#### **C. Moving animals between buildings on the NIH Bethesda campus**

Proper containment of animals transferred between buildings is essential. When practical the VRP Transportation Service should be used for the movement of dogs, cats, primates and farm animals. Transporting rodents by hand carrying them should be limited to travel in a direct and timely manner between buildings with the animals in escape proof enclosures and when all the general (Item A) preceding requirements are met. Rodents and rabbits should be transported in screened (filter-covered) enclosures (cages or disposal transport boxes). The interior of disposable transport boxes should be individually examined before direct disposal - such transport boxes should not be left in corridors for disposal. An immobilizing drug and physical containment system should be used when transporting primates between buildings unless the entire caging system can be relocated with the animals in place.

#### **D. Transportation of animals between the NIH Animal Center (NIHAC) and the Bethesda campus**

The VRP Transportation Service must be used for transporting animals between the NIH campus and NIHAC unless otherwise approved by the IC Veterinarian. VRP has a regularly scheduled daily animal delivery service between the NIHAC and Bethesda campus. An environmentally controlled truck delivers animals from the NIHAC to Bethesda in the morning and from Bethesda to NIHAC in the early afternoon. Arrangements can be made for scheduling animal deliveries by calling 301-496-8184. Special arrangements can also be made by calling VRP in advance.

## **E. Delivery of animals to locations outside NIH**

1. **Health certificate** - For non-rodent animals being shipped from Maryland to another state or country, a United States Department of Agriculture/Animal Plant Health Inspection Service certificate of veterinary inspection is required. The appropriate form (i.e. interstate vs. international, species, appropriate, must be signed by a USDA accredited veterinarian within 30 days of shipment and accompany the animals.

2. **VRP Transportation** - VRP transportation is limited to Montgomery County, Baltimore, and regional transportation terminals.

3. **NIH Shipping Unit** - Call 301-496-5921 for commercial shipping information and complete NIH form 1884 to request animal shipments.

Air shipments of laboratory animals are made by having the NIH Shipping Unit book flights on commercial airlines and having the VRP Transportation Service deliver animals to the local airport prior to the flights. Arrangements must be made by the consignor to have the animals picked up by the consignee at the airport of destination.

The use of an airfreight company for door-to-door delivery of mice and rats only, can be arranged by the NIH Shipping Unit. This means can be used only when atmospheric temperatures are above 45 degrees Fahrenheit or below 85 degrees Fahrenheit, because the company may not have access to environmentally controlled vehicles or holding areas.

4. **Other** - Any other arrangements that are made for transporting animals outside of NIH must meet requirements of the AWRs and be approved by the IC Veterinarian. An Animal Transfer Agreement (see ARAC Guidelines) may be needed when transferring government-owned animals to a non-government research facility.

## **F. Transporting live or dead animals containing radioactive isotopes**

1. Investigators planning to transport live animals containing radioactive materials from one location to another should contact the Radiation Safety Branch at 496-5774 for specific guidance, unless the two locations are within the same building.

2. A radiation safety protocol is required for the use of any amount of radioactive material in large animals (dogs, sheep, monkeys, etc.) and for the use of large amounts of radioactive material in small animals. Special transportation requirements must be addressed in such protocols.

3. Warning labels are required on enclosures used to transport live or dead animals that have been exposed to radioactive hazards. The specific hazard must be identified.

## **G. Transporting animals treated with human pathogens or carcinogenic material**

1. NIH policy (PM 3040-2) requires that IC Animal Care and Use Committees review animal study proposals for research with animals, including work with biohazards or chemical hazards. The transportation of animals that are to be dosed at one location and moved to another needs to be particularly evaluated to assure that proper containment is used to minimize occupational exposure to persons involved with the

move, and to minimize environmental contamination. The Occupational Safety and Health Specialist (496-2346) shall be consulted.

2. Small laboratory animals that have been exposed to human pathogens or toxic/ carcinogenic substances and are actively shedding the hazardous material must be transported in closed systems. Transportation needs for larger animals so exposed will have to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the IC Veterinarian in consultation with the Occupational Safety and Health Specialist.

3. Warning labels are required on enclosures used to transport live or dead animals that have been exposed to chemical or biological hazards. The specific hazard must be identified.

4. Carcasses of contaminated animals must be handled according to the guidelines of the Environmental Protection Branch (496-3537) for handling as Medical Pathological Waste or for disposal as chemical waste. Contaminated animal carcasses that are being transported for pathological examination also need to be placed in double plastic bags (primary barrier) and then into a cardboard box (secondary barrier) and must be accompanied by a detailed history of the type and amount of hazardous material.

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